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Letter dated 22 February 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the Parliaments of Foreign States, International Parliamentary Assemblies and Organizations in connection with the threats to the lives of hostages held by the Russian militants in the territory of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, adopted on 18 February 2016 (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

16-02929 (E) 290216

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Annex to the letter dated 22 February 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the Parliaments of Foreign States, International Parliamentary Assemblies and Organizations in connection with the threats to the lives of hostages held by the Russian militants in the territory of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions

The comprehensive, unconditional and full implementation of the provisions of the Minsk agreements and the package of measures for their implementation, of 12 February 2015, is a key element of the political and diplomatic settlement of the situation in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions caused by the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

At the same time, provisions that relate to the life, freedom and security of people are determinants of the successful and peaceful resolution of the situation and should be a priority.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine notes that contrary to the spirit and language of the Minsk agreements, the Russian Federation and the illegal armed groups it commands have taken no actions to implement the humanitarian provisions of the Minsk agreements, in particular those relating to the release of hostages seized by them and the unimpeded access to humanitarian missions in the occupied territories.

The constant acts of violent harassment and intimidation perpetrated by the Russian occupation forces and its militants in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have become particularly brutal in nature against the hostages seized from among local residents, journalists, volunteers and representatives of the armed forces of Ukraine and other law enforcement agencies. As at 22 February, according to the Joint Center for Control and Coordination of the search and release of illegally imprisoned individuals, hostages and establishing the location of the missing in the area of the Anti-Terrorist Operation, 137 citizens of Ukraine are being held hostage in inhumane conditions, and the fate of 694 citizens of Ukraine remains unknown.

The militants' recently voiced threats regarding their readiness to impose the death penalty against their hostages are particularly alarming.

Consequently, out of concern and feeling responsible for the safety and lives of the citizens of Ukraine who are held hostage by the country-aggressor and the forces it controls, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine calls on the parliaments of foreign states, international parliamentary assemblies and organizations:

- To use all available mechanisms at the governmental, parliamentary and non-governmental levels to give a clear signal to the Russian Federation on the unacceptability of the use of assassinations and extrajudicial executions, torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment against the hostages and local residents of the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions occupied by Russia;

- To demand that the Russian Federation provide immediate access to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the hostages and illegally detained persons and to seek the involvement of ICRC to search for missing persons and identify the bodies of those who have been killed;
- To urge the Russian Federation to implement the transfer of citizens of Ukraine who are being illegally held by Russia and the militants it controls;
- To demand that the Russian Federation and the illegal armed groups it supports cease the ongoing military aggression against Ukraine and immediately fulfil its obligations under the Minsk agreements regarding Ukraine regaining control of its borders;
- To urge the Governments of their countries to continue and strengthen the restrictive measures against the Russian Federation, to ensure the complete fulfilment of its obligations under the Minsk agreements.